

**Learning and Innovation Skills**

Learning and innovation skills are now recognized as skills that distinguish 21<sup>st</sup> Century students. These skills are the mainstay of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) classes across the nation. Critical thinking, problem-solving, and resolution of work-life issues are taught both in personal and career contexts --- from responding to emergencies while caring for children, to selecting apparel to meet special needs, to healthful food substitutions. Students learn to use positive communication skills in the workplace and in personal relationships. They learn to manage life/work issues. Creativity and innovation are fostered and honed in textile and interior design courses, entrepreneurial units, and food science and culinary labs. Collaboration and contextual learning abound as students work in authentic situations and simulations, and serve communities through service learning opportunities. Iowa Core Essential Skills are embedded throughout a middle level and secondary FCS curriculum.

**Life and Career Skills**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills list of life skills, seen by anyone familiar with Family and Consumer Sciences courses, could serve as a list of “Everything I Learned in Family and Consumer Sciences Class.” The accuracy of this claim can be affirmed by almost anyone who took a Family and Consumer Sciences class in middle level or high school.

Family and Consumer Sciences Education has served as a vehicle for students to learn life skills since it was founded over one hundred years ago. Life skills include such “soft skills” as adaptability, initiative, self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity, accountability, leadership, and responsibility. Many pages would be needed to “do justice” to the breadth and depth of Family and Consumer Sciences contributions to life and career skills. It is through working in lab groups, on partner assignments and team projects, as well as independent studies, that students learn the importance of life and career skills and begin to develop them. Family and Consumer Sciences is a place where students “want to be” because they know they will be studying and working with topics that are real to them and participating actively in the learning process. They have opportunities to share in decisions and develop a sense of ownership for their own learning.

FCS programs of study prepare students for career pathways in hospitality and tourism, early childhood, textile and interior design (visual arts), education and training, and human services. On an annual basis, over 45,000 Iowa middle level and secondary students complete a variety of FCS-related coursework preparing them for future jobs that will impact Iowa’s economy. For example, FCS programs prepare students to transition seamlessly to post secondary and continue technical skill development for restaurant-related jobs that represent 10 percent of total employment in Iowa.

**Information, Media and Technology Skills**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century environment is filled with rapidly changing technologies and a myriad of media for accessing information. Family and Consumer Sciences classes teach students to be resourceful and discriminating in their use of technologies. The emphasis is on developing distinctly human abilities while managing technologies in the context of rapid change. As students balance human and machine technologies, they learn management and leadership skills and develop good judgment.

**Core Subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Themes**

Family and Consumer Sciences courses are *project-based*. Students apply content from reading, mathematics, social studies, science, and so on to solve problems, apply strategies, and design systems. Students apply content when reading a lease, reading instructions, or reading a story to a toddler. They use math skills to measure, estimate, and interpret pictorial representations. These academic applications provide a rich context in which understanding and retention of core subject skills flourish.

Four 21<sup>st</sup> Century themes are described as not typically emphasized in schools today --- global awareness; financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; and health literacy. Family and Consumer Sciences courses teach 21<sup>st</sup> Century content. Global awareness is seen in international foods and the impact of global markets on local systems. Financial literacy is taught in many personal finance and consumer-related FCS courses. Entrepreneurial literacy is taught in career-focused courses related to food, textiles and apparel, and interior design. Civic literacy is taught in courses emphasizing family and community and reinforced through programs of the integrated career and technical student leadership organization, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). Health and wellness are widely taught in food, nutrition and wellness courses.

Family and Consumer Sciences is the intersection at which content and context cross, the place where abstract concepts gain deeper meaning. Global awareness, health and wellness, and financial, entrepreneurial, and civic literacy only scratch the surface of 21<sup>st</sup> Century themes in Family and Consumer Sciences classrooms.

### What does FCS Education contribute? How could this contribution be optimized?

Family and Consumer Sciences professionals are in the business of “*human literacy*”. The target market is humankind. The Family and Consumer Sciences investment portfolio is built around development of human capital. The Family and Consumer Sciences toolbox contains universally relevant processing tools --- leadership, thinking, management, and communication. Family and Consumer Sciences Education gives “value-added” by providing contexts in which to apply reading, math, science, and social studies concepts. As the national economy goes global and dropout rates continue to rise, Family and Consumer Sciences professionals are committed to making an even greater contribution to the yield of middle and high school programs. With increased support, assets could be more efficiently used to realize greater individual achievement, national stability, and worldwide progress.

Family and Consumer Sciences content is a complex set of knowledge and skills that builds human literacy in individuals and leads to quality of life for individuals and families. Human literacy is achieved in three main ways---through individual empowerment, life span development, and career preparedness. Knowledge is power! Family and Consumer Sciences courses teach essential knowledge and skills that **empower individuals** to make informed decisions in everyday living and working, as when they are: Evaluating the reliability and relevance of information, analyzing pros and cons of alternatives, and applying information to novel situations.

Family and Consumer Sciences focuses on skills and strategies for meeting human needs---from such basic needs as food, apparel, housing, and safety all the way up Maslow’s Hierarchy to respect and self-actualization. Individuals become the best they can be as they plan for **life span development** and high quality of life. Students leave equipped with skills to develop healthy relationships, understand the “fragility” of a child, realize the impact of choices and decisions, and the realization of the true meaning of being a “responsible and productive citizen.” These skills are best taught in the context of a family and consumer sciences curriculum.

Family and Consumer Sciences Education **prepares for careers** in a rapidly changing workplace and global economy. Individuals learn to access professional opportunities to meet human needs and demonstrate career preparedness through: employability skills and technical expertise, strong work ethic and willingness to continue learning, and competence in resolving work-life issues.

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